

POS 3204
Political Behavior
Fall 2014

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Office Hours: Tu/Th 10:30-11:30,
We 2:00-3:00, and by appointment
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Required Texts:

Barbara A. Bardes and Robert W. Oldendick, *Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind*, 4th ed. (Rowman and Littlefield, 2012).

Benjamin I. Page and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

In addition, assigned journal articles and book chapters (listed below) can be accessed via either (1) the Smathers Library e-journal link (on-campus at www.uflib.ufl.edu; off-campus with your gatorlink account at www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufproxy.html); or (2) UF e-Learning Support Services at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>.

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to several major themes relating to public opinion, voting behavior, and political participation – primarily, though not exclusively, in the United States. How much do ordinary citizens know about politics and government? How complete is their understanding of important issues, and to what extent do their preferences on those issues guide their voting choices? Why don't more Americans participate in politics, either at the polls or in other ways? Do low participation rates mean that the United States (or any other country) is less "democratic" than its citizens would like to believe? Why have citizens become increasingly mistrustful of their governmental leaders and institutions? These are just a few of the questions that we will examine over the next few months.

Grades in this course will be based on the following:

Midterm exam	20 percent (Thursday, Oct 16, in class)
Attendance and participation	20 percent
Periodic written assignments	30 percent
Final exam	30 percent (Wednesday, Dec 17, 10:00 a.m.)

The nature and content of midterm and final exams will be discussed in class. No make-ups will be given except in the case of a fully documented medical or other emergency; anyone who fails to take either exam without such documentation will receive a score of zero. The attendance/ participation component of your grade will be determined using three criteria: (a) daily attendance sign-in (I will provide the sheet of paper, but you are responsible for ensuring that your name is on it); (b) *informed* (showing familiarity with assigned readings) contributions to class discussions; and (c) an occasional pop quiz covering those readings (questions will be simple and answers obvious for anyone who has done the work).

The written assignments are based on topics identified by the course outline provided below. In each instance, students will find an Internet reading relevant to the topic and write a short (2-3 pages, double-spaced) essay briefly summarizing the content of that reading *and relating it to themes covered in class*. For the twelve topics listed, you should choose six on which to write essays (all of which will be graded for content and grammar and returned with comments). Don't lose track of where you stand because there will be no opportunities for extra credit at the end.

TWO NOTES: First, a hard copy of both your essay and the Internet article on which it is based should be handed in during class on the day the essay is due. Second, the main purpose of these assignments is for you to see how ideas discussed in class play out in the real world – so do not base your essay on an academic

source (journal article or book chapter) without first getting approval of the instructor. Material written by academics for a lay audience is acceptable, however.

Minus grades will (if appropriate) be assigned in this course. Information about grades and grading policies at UF can be found at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Students are bound by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on the written essays, will suffer appropriate sanctions and be referred to university authorities for further action.

Any student with a handicap or special need should notify me (and coordinate with Student Services at 202 Peabody Hall) as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. Every effort will be made to accommodate your situation within the guidelines set forth by the university.

A class listserv has been established so that I can send you occasional announcements and keep you informed about any changes that might occur in the schedule. You are automatically on the list by virtue of being enrolled in this course. You must, however, be sure either to check the email in your gatorlink account on a regular basis, or to forward all gatorlink messages to an account that you use more frequently.

COURSE OUTLINE

Aug 26: Introduction

Aug 28: No class

Week 1 (Sep 1-5): Measuring Public Opinion

Assigned Reading:

Bardes-Oldendick, Chapters 1-4, 12.

David W. Moore, *The Opinion Makers: An Insider Exposes the Truth behind the Polls* (Beacon Press, 2008), Chapters 1, 4 (pp. 1-17, 58-80).

Week 2 (Sep 8-12): Voter Competence

Assigned Reading:

Bardes-Oldendick, Chapter 6.

Stephen C. Craig and Michael D. Martinez, "Voter Competence," in *The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice*, 2nd ed., edited by Stephen C. Craig and David B. Hill (Washington: CQ Press, 2011), pp. 62-90, including response by Mark Blumenthal.

Rick Shenkman, "How Ignorant Are We? The Voters Choose but on the Basis of What?" (book excerpt posted at <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174951>).

Internet essay #1 due Sep 9 (topic: polling)

Week 3 (Sep 15-19): Partisanship

Assigned Reading:

Bardes-Oldendick, Chapter 7.

David B. Magleby, Candice J. Nelson, and Mark C. Westlye, "The Myth of the Independent Voter," in *Facing the Challenge of Democracy: Explorations in the Analysis of Public Opinion and Political Participation*, edited by Paul M. Sniderman and Benjamin Highton (Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 238-263.

Eugene M. Caruso et al., "Political Partisanship Influences Perception of Biracial Candidates' Skin Tone," <http://www.pnas.org/content/106/48/20168.full.pdf>

Internet essay #2 due Sep 16 (topic: voter knowledge/competence)

Week 4 (Sep 22-26): Ideology

Assigned Reading:

Bardes-Oldendick, review pp. 132-139 in Chapter 7.

John Sides, "Why Most Conservatives Are Secretly Liberals," *The Monkey Cage* (3/6/14); <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/06/why-most-conservatives-are-secretly-liberals/>

Jack Kerwick, "Most 'Conservatives' Are Secretly Neoconservatives," *The New American* (3/12/14); <http://www.thenewamerican.com/reviews/opinion/item/17828-most-conservatives-are-secretly-neoconservatives>

Pew Research Center, "Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology" (6/26/14); <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/the-political-typology-beyond-red-vs-blue/>

Internet essay #3 due Sep 23 (topic: partisanship)

Week 5 (Sep 29-Oct 3): Social Groups

Assigned Reading:

Bardes-Oldendick, Chapter 5.

Michelle Diggles, "The New Electorate and the Future of the Democratic Party," report issued by Third Way (September 2013); <http://www.thirdway.org/publications/747>

Pew Research Center, "Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends" (3/7/14); <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>

Pew Research Center, "The Gender Gap: Three Decades Old, as Wide as Ever" (3/29/12); <http://www.people-press.org/2012/03/29/the-gender-gap-three-decades-old-as-wide-as-ever/>

Michelle Diggles, "Americaña: Bipartisan Misinterpretation of 'Hispanic America,'" report released by Third Way (May 2014); <http://www.thirdway.org/publications/817>

Internet essay #4 due Sep 30 (topic: ideology)

Week 6 (Oct 6-10) Voting Behavior

Assigned Reading:

William H. Flanigan et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate* (CQ Press 2015), Chapter 8.

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton University Press, 2013), Chapter 7.

Nate Silver, "Models Based on 'Fundamentals' Have Failed at Predicting Presidential Elections"; also John Sides, "In Defense of Presidential Forecasting Models," *New York Times/Five Thirty Eight* (March 2012).

Internet essay #5 due Oct 7 (topic: social group divisions in politics)

Week 7 (Oct 13-17): Midterm Review/Exam

Internet essay #6 due Oct 14 (topic: voting behavior)

Weeks 8-9 (Oct 20-24, 27-31): Polarization/Realignment

Assigned Reading:

Morris P. Fiorina, "America's Missing Moderates: Hiding in Plain Sight"; also Alan I. Abramowitz (with a reply by Fiorina), "Polarized or Sorted? Just What's Wrong With Our Politics Anyway," *The American Interest* (March/April 2013).

Pew Research Center, "Political Polarization in the American Public: How Increasing Ideological Uniformity and Partisan Antipathy Affect Politics, Compromise and Everyday Life" (6/12/14); <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>

Morris P. Fiorina, "Americans Have Not Become More Politically Polarized," *The Monkey Cage* (6/23/14); <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/06/23/americans-have-not-become-more-politically-polarized/>

Michelle Diggles and Lanae Erickson Hatalsky, "The State of the Center," report released by Third Way (May 2014); <http://www.thirdway.org/subjects/152/publications/819>

Michelle Diggles and Lanae Erickson Hatalsky, "Obama's Center-Out Coalition," report released by Third Way (December 2012); <http://www.thirdway.org/subjects/152/publications/621>

Andrew Gelman, "Economic Divisions and Political Polarization in Red and Blue America," *Pathways* (Summer 2011); http://www.stat.columbia.edu/~gelman/research/published/Pathways_Summer11_Trends.pdf

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton University Press, 2013), Chapter 8.

No Internet essays assigned for Oct 21 or Oct 28

Week 10 (Nov 3-7): Issue Attitudes

Assigned Readings:

Bardes-Oldendick, Chapters 8-10.

Benjamin I. Page and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

Pew Research Center, "For the Public, It's Not about Class Warfare, But Fairness" (3/2/12); <http://www.people-press.org/2012/03/02/for-the-public-its-not-about-class-warfare-but-fairness/>

Pew Research Center, "Most See Inequality Growing, but Partisans Differ about Solutions" (1/23/14); <http://www.people-press.org/2014/01/23/most-see-inequality-growing-but-partisans-differ-over-solutions/>

Internet essay #7 due Nov 4 (topic: polarization/realignment)

Week 11 (Nov 10-14): Civil Liberties, Terrorism, and War

Assigned Readings:

Bardes-Oldendick, Chapter 11.

Adam J. Berinsky, "Public Opinion and the Iraq War," in *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., edited by Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (CQ Press, 2010), pp. 59-82.

Pew Research Center, "Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips" (12/3/13); <http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/>

Internet essay #8 due Nov 11 (topic: public opinion on domestic issues)

No class on Tuesday, Nov 11

Week 12 (Nov 17-21): Turnout and Participation

Assigned Readings:

William H. Flanigan et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate* (CQ Press 2015), Chapter 3.

Pew Research Center, "Nonvoters: Who They Are, What They Think" (11/1/12); <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/01/nonvoters-who-they-are-what-they-think/>

Russell J. Dalton, "Bowling Alone Or Protesting with a Group," *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation Is Reshaping American Politics*, revised edition (CQ Press, 2009), Chapter 4.

Internet essay #9 due Nov 18 (topic: public opinion on international/defense issues)

Week 13 (Nov 24-28): Citizen Mistrust

Assigned Readings:

James A. Barnes, "The Great Distrust," *National Journal* (March 26, 2011), pp. 24-28.

Pew Research Center, "Trust in Government Nears Record Low, But Most Federal Agencies Are Viewed Favorably" (10/18/13); <http://www.people-press.org/2013/10/18/trust-in-government-nears-record-low-but-most-federal-agencies-are-viewed-favorably/>

Marc Hetherington and Thomas Rudolph, "Why Don't Americans Trust the Government? Because the Other Party Is in Power," *The Monkey Cage* (1/30/14); <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/01/30/why-dont-americans-trust-the-government-because-the-other-party-is-in-power/>

L. Sandy Maisel, "The Negative Consequences of Uncivil Political Discourse," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (July 2012), pp. 405-411.

Internet essay #10 due Nov 25 (topic: turnout/participation)

No class on Thursday, Nov 27

Weeks 14-15 (Dec 1-5, 8-12): Campaigns/Political Communication

Assigned Readings:

John Sides and Jake Haselswerdt, "Campaigns and Elections," in *New Directions in Public Opinion.*, edited by Adam J. Berinsky (Routledge, 2012), pp. 241-257.

Sides and Vavreck, *The Gamble*, review Chapter 7.

D. Sunshine Hillygus and Todd G. Shields, "The Persuadable Voter: Strategic Candidates and Wedge Issues in Political Campaigns" (excerpted from *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*, Princeton University Press, 2008).

John Sides, "The Moneyball of Campaign Advertising" (Parts 1 and 2), *New York Times/Five Thirty Eight* (October 2011).

Internet essay #11 due Dec 2 (topic: citizen mistrust)

Dec 11: Final exam review, Internet essay #12 due (topic: campaigns/political communication)

Note: All Internet essays should represent original work by students (or, when the work of others is referenced, provide proper citations). To ensure that this is the case, essays must be submitted to an online plagiarism service called turnitin.com. Here is how it works:

The first step is that you need to create a student profile:

1. go to www.turnitin.com
2. click on create user profile
3. fill in your personal email address
4. fill in your personal password
5. type of user: choose student
6. enter class ID (8230355) and password (vote)
7. follow instructions

To log in after creating profile:

1. enter your personal email and password in the box on the upper right hand corner of the home page www.turnitin.com
2. click on POS 3204
3. from there you can submit your paper, just like adding an attachment to an email

Each essay has its own assignment folder. The procedure that you should follow is to (1) give a hard copy of their essay to me during class on the dates specified above, and (2) submit an electronic copy to turnitin.com at some point on the same day. Any assignment that is turned in late (without approval of the instructor) will be docked one letter grade per day. Any assignment that does **not** constitute original work by the author will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct.